

NEW YORK TIMES
7 JULY 1980

Spick-and-Span Estonia

Ready for Olympic Regatta

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Special to The New York Times

TALLINN, U.S.S.R. — Estonia, the smallest of the three Soviet Baltic republics, has turned itself upside down to get ready for this month's Olympic regatta, but hardly any of the major yachting countries will be coming.

"Before the boycott," a young Estonian joked, "we used to wonder what they'd do with the yachting center after the Olympics; now the question is what they'll do with it during the Olympics."

He believed the boycott could only damage the prestige of the Soviet Government, which some Estonians regard as an alien presence in this country of 1.47 million people, 65 percent of them ethnic Estonians.

The Government's Olympic preparations have changed the face of Tallinn, a quaint capital of 430,000 that retained independence from the Russians for centuries as a member of the Hanseatic League of Baltic trading towns. Estonia became part of the Soviet Union in 1940, when Stalin annexed the Baltic states.

Security Is Tight

The yachting center includes a three-story white hotel with red trim that looks like an ocean liner at the pier, a modern press center and separate yacht basins for the various Olympic classes inside a specially constructed breakwater. It is a triumph of design and construction technique. It is also a bastion of security.

Uniformed Soviet police swarm around the center. Plainclothes security agents also swarm around the Finnish-built Viry Hotel four miles away downtown where many tourists will be staying and around the new 26-story Olympia Hotel built for the 300 journalists expected here to cover the Games.

K.G.B. agents appear ready to monitor all their activities. Earlier this year, the authorities arrested an Estonian scientist, Juri Kukk, who had been among the signers of a petition last summer calling for independence for Estonia and the two other Baltic republics, Latvia and Lithuania. National restiveness here has been a sensitive subject for the authorities and they seem determined to keep it out of sight of the Olympic visitors.

A young Estonian said, "the K.G.B. called me in after I visited with some American correspondents last month and told me one of them was a C.I.A. agent. They said the next time a Western correspondent came to town I should notify them. 'Why?' I asked. 'You certainly know about such visits before I do.'"

EXCERPTED